

Address given by Mikhail Gorbachev to the Council of Europe (6 July 1989)

Caption: On 6 July 1989, addressing the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Mikhail Gorbachev, First Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, outlines his idea of 'a common European home' and calls for a reduction in the number of strategic nuclear weapons.

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Address given by Mikhail Gorbachev to the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 6 July 1989)

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for the invitation to make an address here — in one of the epicentres of European politics and of the European Idea.

This meeting could, perhaps, be viewed both as evidence of the fact that the pan-European process is a reality and of the fact that it continues to evolve.

Now that the twentieth century is entering a concluding phase and both the post-war period and the cold war are becoming a thing of the past, the Europeans have a truly unique chance — to play a role in building a new world, one that would be worthy of their past, of their economic and spiritual potential.

Now more than ever before, the world community is experiencing profound changes. Many of its components are currently at the turning point of destinies.

The material foundation of life is changing drastically as are its spiritual parameters. There are new, and increasingly more powerful factors of progress emerging.

But alongside these factors and in their wake, there continue to persist and even escalate the threats emanating from this very progress.

There is an inevitable need to do everything within the power of modern intellect so that Man would be able to continue the role assigned to him on this earth, perhaps in the universe at large, so that he would be able to adapt himself to the stress-inducing newness of modern existence and win the fight for the survival of the present and succeeding generations.

This applies to all mankind. But it applies three times as much to Europe — both in the sense of its historic responsibility and in the sense of the urgency and immediacy of problems and tasks at hand, and in the sense of opportunities.

It is also the specific feature of the situation in Europe that it can cope with all this, live up to the expectations of its peoples and do its international duty at the new stage of world history, only by recognising its wholeness and by making the right conclusions.

The 1920s saw the theory of “a declining Europe” gain wide currency. But that theme seems to be in vogue with some people even today. As far as we are concerned, we do not share the pessimism regarding the future of Europe.

Europe experienced, before everyone else, the consequences of the internationalisation first and foremost of economic and subsequently of the whole public life.

The interdependence of countries, as a higher stage of the process of internationalisation, made itself felt here before it did in other parts of the world.

Europe experienced more than once the attempts at unification by force. But it also experienced lofty dreams of a voluntary democratic community of European peoples.

Victor Hugo said that the day would come when you, France, you, Russia, you, Italy, you, England, you Germany — all of you, all the nations of the continent — will, without losing your distinguishing features and your splendid distinctiveness, merge inseparably into some high society and form a European brotherhood (...). The day would come when the only battlefield would be markets open for trade and minds open to ideas.

Nowadays it is no longer enough merely to ascertain the commonality of destiny and interdependence of

European states.

The idea of European unification should be collectively thought over once again in the process of the co-creation of all nations — large, medium and small.

Is it realistic to raise the question in these terms? I know that many people in the West perceive that the main difficulty lies in the existence of two social systems.

Yet the difficulty lies elsewhere — it lies in the rather widespread belief (or even in the political objective) that what is meant by overcoming the division of Europe is actually overcoming socialism.

But this is a course for confrontation, if not something worse. There will be no European unity along these lines.

The fact that the states of Europe belong to different social systems is a reality. The recognition of this historical fact and respect for the sovereign right of each people to choose their social system at their own discretion are the most important prerequisite for a normal European process.

The social and political order in some particular countries did change in the past, and it can change in the future as well. But this is exclusively a matter for the peoples themselves and of their choice.

Any interference in internal affairs, any attempts to limit the sovereignty of states — whether of friends and allies or anybody else — are inadmissible.

Differences between states cannot be eliminated. In fact, they are even salutary, as we have said on more than one occasion — provided, of course, that the competition between different types of society is aimed at creating better material and spiritual conditions of life for people.

Thanks to *perestroika*, the Soviet Union will be in a position to take full part in such an honest, equal and constructive competition. For all our present shortcomings and lagging behind, we know full well the strong points of our social system which follow from its essential characteristics.

And, we are confident that we shall be able to make use of them both to the benefit of ourselves and of Europe.

It is time to consign to oblivion the cold war postulates when Europe was viewed as an arena of confrontation divided into “spheres of influence” and someone else’s “forward-based defences”, as an object of military confrontation — namely a theatre of war.

In today’s interdependent world the geopolitical notions, brought forth by a different epoch, turn out to be just as helpless in real politics as the laws of classical mechanics in the quantum theory.

In the meantime, it is precisely on the basis of the outmoded stereotypes that the Soviet Union continues — although less than in the past — to be suspected of hegemonistic designs and of the intention to decouple the United States from Europe.

There are even some people who are not unwilling to put the USSR outside of Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals by confining it to the space “from Brest to Brest”. To them, the Soviet Union is ostensibly too big for joint living: the others will not feel very comfortable next to it, or so they say.

The realities of today and the prospects for the foreseeable future are obvious: the Soviet Union and the United States are a natural part of the European international and political structure.

Their involvement in its evolution is not only justified, but also historically conditioned. No other approach is acceptable. In fact, it will even be counterproductive.

For centuries Europe has been making an indispensable contribution to world politics, economy, culture and to the development of the entire civilisation.

Its world historic role is recognised and respected everywhere.

Let us not forget, however, that the metastases of colonial slavery spread around the world from Europe. It was here that fascism came into being. It was here that the most destructive wars started.

At the same time Europe, which can take a legitimate pride in its accomplishments, is far from having settled its debts to mankind. It is something that still has to be done.

And it should be done by seeking to transform international relations in the spirit of humanism, equality and justice and by setting an example of democracy and social achievements in its own countries.

The Helsinki process has already commenced this important work of world-wide significance.

Vienna and Stockholm brought it to fundamentally new frontiers. The documents adopted there are today's optimal expression of the political culture and moral traditions of European peoples.

Now it is up to all of us, all the participants in the European process, to make the best possible use of the groundwork laid down through our common efforts. Our idea of a common European home serves the same purpose too.

It was born out of our realisation of new realities, of our realisation of the fact that the linear continuation of the path, along which inter-European relations have developed until the last quarter of the twentieth century, is no longer consonant with these realities.

The idea is linked with our domestic, economic and political *perestroika* which called for new relations above all in that part of the world to which we, the Soviet Union, belong, and with which we have been tied most closely over the centuries.

We also realised that the colossal burden of armaments and the atmosphere of confrontation did not just obstruct Europe's normal development, but at the same time prevented our country — economically, politically and psychologically — from being integrated into the European process and had a deforming impact on our own development.

These were the motives which impelled us to decide to pursue much more vigorously our European policy which, incidentally, has always been important to us in and of itself.

In our recent meetings with European leaders questions were raised about the architecture of our "common home", on how it should be built and even on how it should be "furnished".

Our discussions of this subject with President François Mitterrand in Moscow and in Paris were fruitful and fairly significant in scope.

Yet even today, I do not claim to carry a finished blueprint of that home in my pocket. I just wish to tell you what I believe to be most important.

In actual fact, what we have in mind is a restructuring of the international order existing in Europe that would put the European common values in the forefront and make it possible to replace the traditional balance of forces with a balance of interests.

What are the questions that deserve specific mention in this context?

First and foremost, these are security issues.

As part of the new thinking, we began with a critical reassessment of our perceptions of the military confrontation in Europe, of the dimensions of the external threat and of the factor of force in strengthening security.

This did not come easy, sometimes it was downright painful. But as a result, decisions were made that have made it possible to break the vicious circle of “action-reaction” in East-West relations.

No doubt, joint Soviet-US efforts in the area of nuclear disarmament played a major starting role in the process.

The INF Treaty got something more than just approval from the Europeans. Many contributed to its conclusion.

The Vienna talks opened a fundamentally new stage in the arms reduction process.

Twenty-three states, rather than just two powers are participating in it. All the thirty-five participants in the CSCE process continue to work out military confidence-building measures. Although the two negotiating processes are going on in different rooms, they are closely interrelated.

There are no “bystanders”, nor can there be any, in peace-building in Europe; all are equal partners here, and everyone, including neutral and non-aligned countries, bears his share of responsibility to his people and Europe.

The philosophy of the concept of a common European home rules out the probability of an armed clash and the very possibility of the use or threat of force, above all military force, by an alliance against another alliance, inside alliances or wherever it may be.

It suggests a doctrine of restraint to replace the doctrine of deterrence. This is not just a play on notions, but a logic of European development imposed by life itself.

Our objectives at the Vienna talks are well-known. We believe — and the US President has also spoken in favour of it — that substantial reductions within two or three years in the level of armaments in Europe can well be achieved, naturally, given the elimination of all asymmetries and imbalances.

I emphasise, all asymmetries and imbalances. No double standards are admissible there.

We are convinced that it is high time talks on tactical nuclear systems were initiated among all interested countries. The ultimate objective is to completely eliminate those weapons. Only Europeans who have no intention of waging war against one another are threatened by those weapons. What are they for then and who needs them?

Are nuclear arsenals to be eliminated or retained at all costs? Does the strategy of nuclear deterrence enhance or undermine stability?

On all these questions the positions of NATO and the Warsaw Pact appear to be diametrically opposed.

We, however, are not dramatising our differences. We are looking for solutions and invite our partners to join us in this quest.

After all, we see the elimination of nuclear weapons as a stage-by-stage process. Europeans can travel part of the distance separating us from complete destruction of nuclear weapons together, without backing away from their positions — with the USSR remaining faithful to its non-nuclear ideals, and the West to the concept of “minimum deterrence”.

However, there is merit in figuring out what lies behind the concept of “minimum” deterrence and where the limit is, beyond which nuclear retaliation capability is transformed into an attack capability. Here much remains unclear, and ambiguity breeds mistrust.

Why shouldn't experts from the USSR, the United States, the United Kingdom and France, as well as from the states who have nuclear weapons on their territories, hold an in-depth discussion of those questions?

If they arrive at some common views, the problem would become simpler at the political level, too.

If it becomes clear that NATO countries are ready to join us in negotiations on tactical nuclear weapons, we could, naturally after consulting our allies, carry out without delay further unilateral reductions in our tactical nuclear missiles in Europe.

The Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact countries, notwithstanding the Vienna talks, are already unilaterally reducing their armed forces and armaments in Europe.

Their posture and operational structure are changing in line with the defensive doctrine of reasonable sufficiency.

That doctrine — both in terms of quantities of armaments and troops and in terms of their deployment, training and all military activities — makes it physically impossible to launch an attack or to conduct large-scale offensive operations.

In any case, as was declared at the USSR Supreme Soviet, we intend, if the situation permits, to cut sharply — by one and a half to two times — the share of our defence expenditure in national income by 1995.

We have seriously addressed conversion of the military industry. All CSCE participating countries will come to face this problem one way or another. We are ready to exchange views and share experience.

We think that the opportunities offered by the United Nations can also be used and, say, a joint working group can be set up within the Economic Commission for Europe to look into conversion problems.

Facing the European parliamentarians, and consequently the whole of Europe, I should like to say once again a few words about our straightforward and clear-cut positions on disarmament. These positions are the result of the new thinking and they were laid down on behalf of our entire people in the Resolution of the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR according to which: we are in favour of a nuclear-free world and in favour of eliminating all nuclear weapons by the turn of the century; we are in favour of complete elimination of chemical arms at the earliest possible date, and we favour the destruction, once and for all, of the production base for the development of such arms; we are in favour of a radical reduction in conventional arms and armed forces down to a level of reasonable defence sufficiency that would rule out the use of military force against other countries for the purposes of attack; we are in favour of complete withdrawal of all foreign troops from the territories of other countries; we are absolutely opposed to the development of any space weapons; we are in favour of dismantling military blocs and launching immediately a political dialogue between them to that end; we are in favour of creating an atmosphere of trust that would rule out any surprises; we are in favour of a deep, consistent and effective verification of all treaties and agreements that may be concluded with respect to disarmament issues.

I am convinced that it is high time the Europeans brought their policies and their conduct into line with a new common sense — not to prepare for war, not to intimidate one another, not to compete with one another either in improving weapons, or, especially, in attempts to offset the initiated reductions, but rather to learn to make peace together and to lay jointly a solid basis for it.

If security is the foundation of a common European home, then all-round co-operation is its bearing frame.

What is symbolic about the new situation in Europe and throughout the world in recent years, is an intensive inter-state dialogue, both bilateral and multilateral. The network of agreements, treaties and other accords has become considerably more extensive. Official consultations on various issues have become a rule.

For the first time contacts have been established between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, between the European Community and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), not to mention many political and public organisations in both parts of Europe.

We are pleased with the decision of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to grant the Soviet Union the status of a special guest state. We are prepared to co-operate. But we think that we can go further than that.

We could accede to some of the international conventions of the Council of Europe that are open to other states — on the environment, culture, education, television broadcasting. We are prepared to co-operate with the specialised agencies of the Council of Europe.

The Parliamentary Assembly, the Council of Europe and the European Parliament are situated in Strasbourg. Should our ties be expanded in the future and be put on a regular basis, we would open here, with the French Government's consent, of course, a Consulate General.

Interparliamentary ties have major significance for making the European process more dynamic. An important step has already been made: late last year a first meeting of the parliamentary leaders of thirty-five countries was held in Warsaw.

We have duly appreciated the visit to the USSR of the delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe headed by its President, Mr. Björck.

The delegation could, I hope, feel directly the potent and energetic pulse of the Soviet *perestroika*.

We regard as particularly important the recently initiated contacts with the European Parliament.

Inter alia, we took note of its resolutions on military-political issues which are seen by the Parliament as the core of the Western European consensus in the area of security.

In this connection I cannot but mention the plans for “the Western European defence”. Of course, any state or any group of states have the right to take care of their security in the forms they consider most appropriate.

It is important, though, that these forms are not in contradiction with the prevailing positive trends, that is, the trend towards a military *détente*, that they do not lead to the reappearance of confrontational tendencies in European politics and hence to a renewed arms race.

The need to convene within the next eighteen to twenty-four months a second Helsinki-type meeting is coming to the fore with ever increasing urgency. It is time for the present generation of the leaders of the European countries, the USA and Canada to discuss, in addition to the most immediate issues, how they contemplate future stages of progress towards a European Community of the twenty-first century.

As far as the economic content of the common European home is concerned, we regard as a realistic prospect — though not a close one — the emergence of a vast economic space from the Atlantic to the Urals where Eastern and Western parts would be strongly interlocked.

In this sense, the Soviet Union's transition to a more open economy is essential; and not only for ourselves, for a higher economic effectiveness and for meeting consumer demands.

Such a transition will increase East-West economic interdependence and, thus, will tell favourably on the

entire spectrum of European relations.

Similarities in the functioning of economic mechanisms, strengthening of ties and economic interest, mutual adaptation, training of experts — these are all long-term factors of co-operation, a guarantee of stability of the European and the international process as a whole.

My contacts with prominent representatives of the business communities of the United Kingdom, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy and the United States during my trips abroad and on numerous occasions in Moscow, testify to an increased interest in doing business with us in the conditions of *perestroika*.

Many of them do not overdramatise our difficulties, but take into account the specificity of the moment, when the reform is more successful in destroying obsolete mechanisms than in introducing new ones.

I have also noted the resolve of experienced businessmen with a broad political outlook to take justified risks, demonstrate audacity and act with long-term prospects in mind.

And incidentally, not only in the interests of business but also in the interests of progress and peace and in universal human interests.

We also feel aware that focusing on the immediate commercial profit may mean missing out on the chance for broad-scale and much more beneficial long-term economic co-operation with us as an integral part of the European process.

I think that the distinguished audience will agree that in our age segregating economic ties from scientific and technological ties is something less than normal. Yet, East-West relations have of late been bled white by COCOM.

If one could justify such practices at the peak of the cold war, today many restrictions seem utterly ridiculous.

Of course, we, too, are often excessively closed. However, we have begun to straighten this out. We have started to take down our “domestic COCOM” — the wall separating military and civilian production — in particular, in connection with conversion.

So maybe experts and representatives of the respective governments could get together and break all these cold war log-jams, bring secrecy down to reasonable limits which are indeed required for security, and give the green light to the normal two-way flow of scientific knowledge and technical art?

The following projects, for example, are equally urgent both for the East and West of Europe: a trans-European high-speed railway; a common European programme on new solar-energy technologies and equipment; processing and storing nuclear waste and enhancing the safety of nuclear power stations; additional fibre optic channels for transmitting information; an all-European satellite television system.

Of great interest is the proposed high definition television. The research is under way in several countries and this system has a promising future for us within a European home. Naturally, one would prefer the most advanced and inexpensive system.

In 1985 in Paris, President Mitterrand and I put forward the idea of developing an international experimental thermo-nuclear reactor. It is an inexhaustible source of environmentally clean energy.

Under the aegis of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), this project — the result of pooling the scientific capabilities of the Soviet Union, West European countries, the United States, Japan and other countries — is moving to the stage of practical research.

Scientists believe that such a reactor could be built by the end of the century. It is a great achievement of academic thought and technological art, which will serve the future of Europe and the entire world.

The model of economic *rapprochement* between Eastern and Western Europe will to a large extent be determined by the relations between Western regional organisations — the European Community, EFTA, and the CMEA. Each of them has its own dynamics of development and its own problems.

We do not doubt that the integration processes in Western Europe are acquiring a new quality. We are far from underestimating the emergence in the next few years of a single European market.

The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance is also working towards establishing an integrated market though we are lagging far behind in this respect.

The rate of internal change in the CMEA will to a considerable degree determine what will have a priority development in the near future: ties between the CMEA and the European Community as groups or ties between individual socialist countries and the European Community.

It is quite possible that now and then one or the other form will come to the forefront. What is important is that both forms fit into the logic of establishing a common European economic dimension.

As for the Soviet Union, we shall shortly see a trade and economic agreement between our country and the European Community. We attach substantial significance to this act from the standpoint of all-European interests too.

We are, naturally, far from seeing our ties with the EC as opposed to ties with other associations or states. The EFTA countries are our good and old partners.

It might be reasonable to talk also about developing ties between the CMEA and EFTA and use this channel of multilateral co-operation, too, in the construction of a new Europe.

The common European home will have to be environmentally clean as well. Life has taught us bitter lessons. Major ecological problems have long ago transcended national confines. Setting up a regional ecological security system is therefore an urgent task.

It is quite possible that it is in this direction, which is indeed a priority direction, that the all-European process will advance most rapidly.

Elaborating a long-term continental ecological programme could be a first step.

We have proposed setting up a United Nations centre for emergency ecological assistance.

Such a centre or agency with a warning and monitoring system is urgently needed in Europe.

We might also give thought to establishing an all-European institute for ecological research and assessment, and ultimately to the creation of an organ with binding authority.

The Vienna meeting decided that an environmental forum of the thirty-five would be held this autumn in Sofia, Bulgaria. It could also discuss the problems in practical terms.

Humanity is suffering increasingly grave losses as a result of natural and technological disasters. Scores and even hundreds of thousands of lives are lost each year. Huge sums are spent to control the consequences. Scientists are alarmed because the largest cities are increasingly vulnerable in the face of natural disasters.

We are aware of the major projects designed to cope with this growing global threat.

The USSR Academy of Sciences has established an International Institute for the Theory of Earthquake Prediction, and it invites scientists from around the world to take part in developing a scientific basis for the problems of security and safety of larger cities, forecasting of droughts and possible climatic catastrophes.

The Soviet Union is ready to provide for these purposes satellites, oceanic vessels and new technology. It would probably be useful to involve also the military services of various countries, above all medical and engineering units, in the international rescue and restoration efforts.

The humanitarian content of the pan-European process is one of the crucial aspects.

A world where military arsenals would be reduced but where human rights would be violated would not be a safe place.

We have come to this conclusion ourselves once and for all.

The decisions made by the Vienna meeting represent a real breakthrough in this respect. It laid down a programme of joint actions by European countries, made up of all kinds of activities. Understanding was reached on many issues which until very recently had been stumbling blocks in East-West relations.

We are convinced that the all-European process should rest on a solid legal ground. We are thinking of an all-European home as a community rooted in law. And for our part we have begun to move in that direction.

The Resolution adopted by the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR says, *inter alia*:

“Guided by international rules and principles, including those in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Helsinki accords and agreements, and bringing its domestic legislation in line with the above, the USSR will seek to contribute to the establishment of a world community of states rooted in law.”

Europe could set an example in that respect. Naturally, its international legal integrity includes national and social specific features of states. Each European country, the United States and Canada have their own laws and traditions in the humanitarian sphere, even though there exist some universally recognised rules and principles.

It would, perhaps, be useful to make a comparison of the existing legislation on human rights by setting up to that end an *ad hoc* working group or a kind of European institute for comparative humanitarian law.

In view of the different social systems we are not likely to achieve a complete identity of views. However, the Vienna meeting and the recent London and Paris conferences have demonstrated that common views and common approaches do exist and can be multiplied.

This makes it possible to speak of the possibility of creating a European legal space.

At the Paris Humanitarian Forum, the Soviet Union and France co-sponsored an initiative to that effect. They were joined by the Federal Republic of Germany, Austria, Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia.

What we need is to expand greatly cultural co-operation, increase interaction in the field of humanitarian sciences and to attain a higher level of information exchanges. In a word, the Europeans must step up the process of getting to know each other better. A special role here could be played by television, which brings into contact scores and hundreds of millions, rather than hundreds or thousands, of men and women.

There are also certain dangers inherent in that. They should be seen. Performing stages, screens, exhibition halls, and publishing houses are flooded with commercial pseudo-culture alien to Europe. National languages are treated with disdain. All this calls for our common attention and joint work in the spirit of

respect for the true national values of each and everyone.

That may involve sharing of experience in the preservation of cultural heritage; actions to familiarise European peoples with the original present-day culture of each other; and collective promotion of language studies.

This may also involve co-operation in the preservation of historical and cultural monuments, and joint production of films for cinema, television and video which promote national cultural achievements and the best examples of artistic creation of the past and of today.

Ladies and gentlemen, Europeans can meet the challenges of the coming century only by pooling their efforts.

We are convinced that what they need is one Europe — peaceful and democratic, a Europe that maintains all its diversity and common humanistic ideas, a prosperous Europe that extends its hand to the rest of the world. A Europe that confidently advances into the future.

It is in such a Europe that we visualise our own future.

Perestroika, which seeks to radically renew Soviet society, determines our policy aimed at the development of Europe precisely in that direction.

Perestroika is changing our country, advancing it to new horizons. That process will continue, extend and transform Soviet society in all dimensions: economic, social, political and spiritual, in all domestic affairs and human relations.

We have firmly and irreversibly embarked on that road. This was confirmed by the resolution passed by the Congress of People's Deputies on the "Basic guidelines of domestic and foreign policies of the USSR". That document confirmed in the name of the people our choice, our path of *perestroika*.

I commend this resolution to your attention. It has a fundamental and revolutionary significance for the destinies of the country to which you yourselves refer as a superpower.

As a result of its implementation, you and your governments, your parliaments and peoples will soon be dealing with a socialist nation totally different from what it has been up to now.

And this will have and cannot but have a favourable impact on the entire world process.

I thank you.